

CITY COUNCIL

Public Works Committee

Monday, November 21, 2011

Agenda

5:00 p.m.

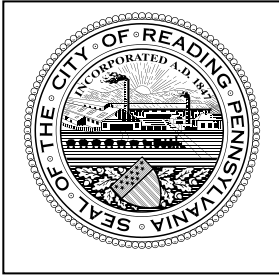
Committee Members: M. Goodman-Hinnershitz Chair, D. Sterner, S. Marmarou

Although Council committee meetings are open to the public, public comment is not permitted. However, citizens are encouraged to attend and observe the committee meetings. Comment from citizens or professionals during the meeting may be solicited on agenda topics via invitation by the Committee Chair.

- I. Update Egelman's Park and Dam Condition**
- II. Update Recreation Commission**
- III. Ordinance Regulating Utilities in City Streets**
- IV. River Tribe Project**

Follow-up Issues:

- **Stormwater Utility**
- **Former Police Academy Building**
- **Establish and Enforce a Utility Cut Program (PW 15)**
- **Fleet Maintenance Contract with Neighboring Municipalities (PW 03)**
- **Inventory of Lease Agreements (PW11)**
- **Seek Sponsorships for parks and park maintenance**
- **Capital Repairs to Library – in progress**
- **Managing all street lights**
- **Installation of traffic device 5th & Bingaman – in progress**
- **Citadel Traffic Issues – C. Jones/M. Fizz/D. Campbell**



CITY COUNCIL

Public Works Committee

Monday, September 19, 2011
Meeting Report

Committee Members Attending: D. Sterner, S. Marmarou, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz Chair

Others Attending: V. Spencer, C. Geffken, S. Katzenmoyer, L. Kelleher, M. Schorn, D. Reed, F. Denbowski, D. Hoag, R. Johnson

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Chair, called the Public Works Committee meeting to order at 5:07 pm.

Update Egelman's Park Dam

Ms. Hoag stated that there was no impact on the dam from the storms. She stated that Gannett Fleming has begun work on subsurface damage at the edge of Hill Road. She stated that the stone wall holds the tow of the dam and also serves as a retaining wall to the park. The wall has begun crumbling at the road level. Traffic has been diverted to the other lane.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that traffic on Hill Road has increased and questioned if this would further impact the wall. Ms. Hoag stated that Gannett Fleming has begun improvements. She stated that storm water now flows over the road and the laying of winter salt may have contributed to the crumbling of the wall. She stated that stormwater drainage will be added. The upper dam is full of debris which must be removed. She noted the beautiful stonework at this area and noted that it will need to be re-pointed. DEP is also reviewing the area.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the funding available for this project. Mr. Geffken stated that the

position of the State is to remove dams so there is funding available for removal but not for maintenance.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if the Izaak Walton League was contacted to assist. Mr. Geffken stated that they have not been approached.

Ms. Hoag stated that this dam serves a purpose as a fish hatchery.

Ms. Reed questioned if the hatchery was important to the State. Ms. Hoag replied affirmatively.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if a breach of the dam would cause damage downstream. Ms. Hoag stated that this is not a large body of water but that it would be prudent for the City to devise an emergency plan. She stated that the recent flooding at Pendora Park was caused by debris clogging the drain.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that there are springs under Perkiomen Ave and many which come down from Mount Penn are in this area.

Ms. Hoag stated that the situation is being closely monitored.

Update Egelman's Park

Mr. Spencer stated that meetings have been held with Lower Alsace Township about the park. Mr. Geffken stated that he has been in contact with the Township regarding a lease agreement.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the lease would be for the park area and the ball field. Mr. Geffken stated that it would be for the park area only. He stated that there is no park land controlled by Lower Alsace.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the City move ahead on this issue cautiously. She noted the poor condition of the pavilions.

Mr. Denbowski stated that Lower Alsace Township is willing to assist the City with the processing of its yard waste as part of the lease agreement.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned a timeline. Mr. Geffken stated that it is still in the discussion stage.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to move slowly as this is a big decision. She noted her concern about the degradation of all City parks and playgrounds.

Ms. Reed expressed her appreciation to Lower Alsace and reminded all that they assisted the City with the Antietam situation. She stated that the City can no longer maintain all its parks.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for discussion regarding Mineral Spring Park.

Ms. Reed requested a discussion of the riverfront.

Ordinance Regulating Utilities in City Streets

Ms. Hoag stated that several items will be combined into one ordinance – street assessment, utility cuts and utilities in streets. She stated that bids will be advertised soon.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the problems with utilities in City streets and how utility companies perform their work.

Mr. Marmarou noted the terrible condition of Cotton St and the length of time it is taking to have it repaired. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that repaving is occurring to replace the steel plates but that the macadam work is now blocking the storm water drains into the street. She stated that this will become problematic for residents.

Mr. Geffken stated that the entire street will be repaved. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for milling to occur before repaving.

Mr. Marmarou stated that many utilities also run under City sidewalks. Mr. Hoag stated that there are many instances when sidewalks are repaired or replaced which block the Water Authorities access to turn water service on and off.

Mr. Spencer questioned if permits are obtained and work monitored. Ms. Hoag stated that permits are obtained through engineering but that the decrease in staff has made it difficult to monitor. She stated that this will be a responsibility of the newly created systems utilities engineer.

Mr. Marmarou noted that much work is performed without permits.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted her observation that the longer this project continues on Cotton Street the less maintenance residents are performing on their homes. She noted her

hope that when the street is repaved that there will be better maintenance. She also noted that the new gas meters are not attractive.

Storm Clean-Up

Ms. Hoag stated that initially the clean up consisted of removing branches and debris. She stated that she is now chasing sinkholes created by the large amount of rainfall. She stated that many issues are relative to the City's old underground steam system and it is unknown who is responsible to correct the problems.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the procedure to report debris that has not been cleaned up. Ms. Hoag stated that residents should call the Customer Service Center to report the debris.

Ms. Reed questioned if residents could harvest fallen trees. Mr. Geffken stated that residents can harvest fallen trees.

Mr. Spencer stated that the Water Authority harvests trees on their properties. He stated that they have the equipment necessary and suggested that Public Works contact them regarding borrowing this equipment. Mr. Geffken stated that he has not spoken with the Water Authority.

Mr. Spencer stated that much money can be involved in harvesting.

Stormwater Utility

Ms. Hoag stated that work has continued on this issue. She stated that during her 2012 budget preparation she prepared two estimates and forwarded them to Hazen Sawyer. She stated that the utility fee must cover both operations and capital needs.

Mr. Spencer questioned if stormwater was addressed in the consent decree. Ms. Hoag stated that the mapping of the system is addressed but that the collection system included in the consent decree is for sanitary sewer collection.

Mr. Spencer stated that the collection systems are very closely related. He questioned which should be addressed first. Ms. Hoag stated that the stormwater regulations are an unfunded Federal mandate.

Mr. Spencer questioned how many municipalities charge a stormwater utility fee in Pennsylvania. Ms. Hoag stated that Philadelphia charged a fee based on meter size in the past

but has recently changed to charging a fee based on the amount of impervious surface on a property. She stated that many municipalities in other states charge this fee.

Mr. Spencer noted his concern that Act 47 has caused large increases in taxes and that many residents will view this as another tax. Ms. Hoag stated that the Federal program is being administered by the State and that they disagree on many issues. She stated that it could be some time before this fee is levied.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that public education begin and suggested the Environmental Advisory Council assist in this area.

Mr. Marmarou also noted his concern with an additional fee. He stated that the public was very upset when this fee was discussed in the past. Ms. Hoag noted the need to determine the fee before education should begin.

Mr. Marmarou noted the need for examples so that residents have a better idea of their approximate cost. Mr. Geffken stated that Ms. Hoag serves on many committees and is very well aware of all the issues with stormwater.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned a timeline for the implementation of this fee. Ms. Hoag stated that the fee must be determined before moving forward.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the EAC has discussed this issue. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that it has been discussed in the past and that it is in their pending issues. Ms. Hoag provides updates as needed.

Update Bernhart Park

Ms. Hoag stated that work was progressing well until the storms hit. She stated that the firm is now waiting for the area to dry. She stated that there is one area which is always soggy and that Exide has agreed to plant willow trees to help alleviate the problem.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the Bernhart Creek overflowed during the storms and caused problems on Kutztown Road. Ms. Hoag stated that the spillway has sustained damage due to the storms and this information will be submitted to FEMA. She stated that the overflow of the creek was caused by a clogged drain problem similar to that at Pendora.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that many efforts are focused on the riverfront area but that there are also other areas of concern.

Closure of Walnut Street

Ms. Hoag reported that Walnut St has been closed between N Front and N 2nd to repair a sinkhole. She stated that this is the site of a water main break in January of 2011.

Mr. Waltman arrived at this time.

Ms. Hoag reported that it will take approximately two months to make the repairs due to the utilities that run under Walnut St. She stated that the City, all utilities and PennDOT are all communicating effectively. She stated that the hole is now 10' X 10' wide X 8' deep. Due to its size there will be no traffic allowed in the area.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this speaks to the problems with utilities and the City's infrastructure. She stated that when there are problems and people are inconvenienced it makes you realize how services are delivered.

Ms. Hoag stated that area residents will be educated about the problem and the timeframe. Correspondence will be bilingual.

Update Sewer Main Break

Mr. Johnson reported that the breaks occurred in the same section of the 42" force main. He stated that the earthquake and recent storms which caused increased flows have caused multiple failures. He stated that three leaks were repaired during two storms and that two additional leaks were discovered today.

Mr. Geffken stated that Mr. Johnson believes that this section of pipe was not correctly repaired when it was relocated during the PennDOT project for the construction of the 422 bypass.

Mr. Waltman questioned how long this section of pipe is. Mr. Johnson stated that it is 600'.

Mr. Waltman questioned if the rest of the pipes are sound. Mr. Johnson stated that he has been accessing their condition but that he believes the problems are in this section only. He stated that the pipe is worn on the inside and the outside and that it has served its lifespan.

Mr. Geffken reminded Council that there is no redundant system.

Mr. Waltman questioned the cost to replace this 600' section. Mr. Johnson stated that he is still

in emergency mode but will inform Council about the costs of repairs.

Mr. Waltman noted the need to review procedures to decrease fines. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to document the City's work.

Mr. Spencer stated that there is no way to predict the domino effect these breaks may have on the rest of the system. Mr. Johnson stated that work proceeds carefully to reduce the risk of other damage. He stated that most problems are occurring near joints.

Mr. Geffken stated that the force main project became a priority after the 2008 break.

Mr. Spencer questioned if PennDOT should cover these costs as they caused the damage. He stated that the Water Authority is running into a similar situation on Route 61. Mr. Geffken stated that he will be looking into this possibility but that there may be a time limit on claims.

Mr. Johnson stated that after work is complete the workers are debriefed in order to improve their response. He stated that he attended the 60% design meeting on the new facility today. He stated that while making emergency repairs he is not losing sight of the larger project needs.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned how municipalities downstream are notified. Mr. Johnson stated that there are mandatory reporting procedures.

Mr. Spencer questioned the opinion of DEP. Mr. Johnson stated that they are pleased with the City's response but are concerned that the situation is becoming chronic.

Mr. Waltman questioned if the City was communicating this information to the federal courts. Mr. Geffken stated that they have been in complete communication.

Mr. Spatz, Reading Eagle reporter, questioned if the City has received a bill from Pottstown for the increased costs caused by the sewer breaks. Mr. Geffken stated that he has not but that the bill will be paid if the charges are appropriate.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed her thanks for the hard work to correct this situation. Mr. Geffken stated that Mr. Johnson has gone above and beyond in these situations. Mr. Johnson stated that the entire team has gone above and beyond and that he is very proud of their handling of the situations. He stated that the contractors have also performed well and it has been a great team effort.

Acquisition of Hillside Pool

Mr. Geffken stated that the City will make this a part of a future capital budget.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the pool has been deconstructed and that the acquisition would be for the land and the shell of the pool only.

Mr. Waltman noted his hope that the Recreation Commission could fund this venture.

Update Recreation Commission

Mr. Denbowski stated that the final report contained 39 tasks that must be completed for the Commission to begin.

Mr. Schorn stated that Mr. Spencer's "In Your District" show was very informative. He stated that the City employee who was the guest was very well spoken and described the different quality of life violations that could be issued.

Mr. Schorn stated that the Commission concept is not a cure all for recreation. He stated that the start of this Commission dissolves 120 years of recreation history for the City. He stated that there will no longer be recreation employees and that employees will be hired and all equipment will need to be purchased by the Commission. He noted the need for the Commission to separate the sustainable programs from the subsidized programs. He stated that the Commission will need partners to continue programming. He stated that the current recreation employees have 33 years combined experience in recreation with the City. He noted the need to encourage these employees to apply to become Commission employees.

Mr. Schorn stated that he has been working with the School District and encouraged Council to keep politics out of the citizen appointment process.

Mr. Scorn stated that he is waiting to hear back from DCNR regarding the receipt of the circuit rider grant to cover the salary of the executive director. He stated that he did contact the City's State representatives and feels very optimistic that the grant will be approved.

Mr. Schorn stated that the work group has been meeting for 21 months to bring the Commission to fruition. He stated that citizen interviews have begun and all those who have expressed interest should be brought forward.

Mr. Schorn announced that the first meeting of the Commission will be held on Tuesday,

October 4 at 7 pm in the School District Board room. He noted the need for the meetings to be open and transparent and that many issues will be discussed as there is much work to do.

Mr. Schorn clarified that the City will continue to perform maintenance on City facilities. He added that the Hillside pool is a good idea but that basics need to be addressed first.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested a report on the bullet points contained in the final report and on the progress of each.

Mr. Spencer stated that the work group was facilitated by Sue Landes, the Executive Director of the Lancaster Recreation Commission. He questioned how she recommended the Commission move forward and the challenges she faced during her tenure. Mr. Schorn stated that she recommends that the executive director be involved in many decisions. He stated that advertisements for the position cannot be run until the City learns if it received the grant funding. He noted that additional Commission members also need to be named.

Mr. Waltman questioned the payments to the Commission. Mr. Schorn stated that they are to be paid quarterly.

Mr. Waltman noted that benefits will need to be offered to Commission employees and requested that the City and/or School District leverage their carriers to decrease the cost of medical benefits and charge the costs back to the Commission until it is on more solid footing.

Mr. Denbowski expressed his thanks to Mr. Schorn for his hard work. He stated that the personnel being discussed are not management and negotiations have been limited. He stated that the City allocated enough to the Commission to cover comparable benefits for the two current employees to continue as Commission employees. He noted the need for a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the Commission for maintenance issues. He stated that Council will review and authorize this MOU.

Mr. Schorn noted the need for legal work and his hope that the solicitors for the City and School District would assist as in-kind services. He noted the many areas to cover.

Mr. Waltman stated that the success of the Commission impacts both the City and the School District.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the pay scale of the two current employees. Mr. Denbowski noted the need for the Commission to set the pay scale. He reiterated that enough has been

budgeted to allow for a comparable salary and benefits.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if the employees would continue in the City's pension plan. Mr. Denbowski stated that they would not.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if the employees were vested in the pension plan. Mr. Denbowski stated that they were.

Mr. Marmarou questioned when the employees would be eligible to receive pension payments. Mr. Denbowski stated that it would be many years.

Mr. Spencer questioned why the transfer of these employees was not possible as was done with the Water Authority. Mr. Geffken stated that there are State regulations covering the Water Authority that does not cover the Commission.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this and other keys to the Commission's success were discussed by the work group.

Mr. Geffken stated that the City solicitor's office would provide in-kind services for the formation of the 501 (C) 3 as there is experience from forming the Pagoda Foundation. He suggested that the Commission find an attorney to perform pro bono work on the MOU as it would be questionable for the same attorney to represent both sides in this instance.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that the Commission must hit the ground running.

Mr. Spencer stated that a big issue is appointments being made before the October 4 meeting. He stated that no citizens have been named. Mr. Schorn stated that a quorum has been reached as all professionals have been named but noted the need to appoint citizens.

Mr. Waltman noted the need to address the employees quickly. He noted that it would be a disservice to the Commission to lose that experience.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if employees could be hired without an executive director. Mr. Denbowski stated that it's possible but that it depends on the position of the Commission.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that naming an executive director by the end of December will be challenging. She noted the need to get started as soon as possible.

Mr. Spencer stated that the executive director should also have a say on the employees hired. Mr. Schorn agreed and stated that the current employees are looking forward to a new beginning.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz thanked Mr. Schorn for his valuable input and hard work.

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC City Clerk

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Recreation and Conservation Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Project. Special appreciation is extended to these people who served on the project committee:

Frank Denbowski, Chief of Staff, City of Reading

Marsha Goodman-Hinnershitz, Member, Reading City Council

Shelly Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk, City of Reading

Linda Kelleher, City Clerk, City of Reading

John Santoro, Jr., Member, Reading School Board

Mike Schorn, Education Coordinator, City of Reading

Otis Smith, Chair, Reading Park and Recreation Advisory Council

Vaughn Spencer, President, Reading City Council

Yvonne Stroman, President, Reading School Board

Frank Vecchio, Former Acting Superintendent of Schools, Reading School District

Jim Washington, Vice-President, Reading School Board

Summary

The City of Reading has a long history of providing quality recreation services for its residents.

Less than 15 years ago, the City staffed 28 summer playground programs for children. By 2010, only five supervised playground sites operated. In 2011, the playground program was not held due to lack of funding. The City's parks are also beginning to fall into decline. The City's current financial situation calls for alteration in its approach to recreation programming in order to continue to provide public recreation for its citizens, in particular its children. Presently the City Recreation Division has just two full-time staff positions left, and few recreation programs are offered.

The long-term sustainability of basic services provided by Pennsylvania cities – police, fire, water, sanitation, public health, streets, parks and recreation, traffic control and so on – is in jeopardy. Dwindling resources are leaving cities such as Reading unable to deliver those basic services needed to support economic vitality and quality of life for residents.

Mayor Tom McMahon convened a municipal recreation work group in 2009 to explore forming new community partnerships to share the cost of providing high-quality, accessible youth recreation programming in Reading. In February 2010, the work group released a preliminary report recommending that the City pursue the establishment of a Reading Recreation Commission in partnership with the Reading School District. The non-profit status of a recreation commission will open up grant possibilities, business support and donations that government cannot access. A recreation commission would also be able to keep the revenue earned by programs to fund its operation and expand and improve its programs.

The other reasons to create a recreation commission are all quality of life reasons. Investing in public recreation is investing in solutions to help alleviate community problems, such as low high school graduation rates, inadequate early childhood care and education, crime and gang activities among youth, truancy, drug and alcohol use and teen pregnancy. When youth are involved in positive, constructive activities, these problems are lessened.

The City and School District realized that they had a special opportunity to foster a collaborative funding and facility relationship for public recreation, to primarily benefit City children.

With the help of DCNR, a preliminary meeting was held in October 2010 to discuss undertaking a peer study in order to sustain City-wide recreation opportunities, particularly for youth. The first meeting of the project committee was held in December. It was agreed that this was to be an action-oriented project, not a study-oriented project.

The purpose of the project committee's work was to explore forming a community partnership between the School District and the City, with a focus on sharing resources, to provide expanded youth recreation programming. The overall goal for the committee was to establish the Reading Recreation Commission as a 501 (c)(3) intergovernmental non-profit agency. An aggressive six-month timeline was set for completion of the project.

Six goals were adopted for the project committee's work:

1. Make it possible to expand, enhance and deliver City public recreation services more effectively through coordination between the City and School District.
2. Keep the effort as simple and straight forward as possible.
3. Focus the effort to form a recreation commission on expanded youth programming.
4. Create an agency with the structure and ability to keep the revenue earned from programs to fund the agency's operations and expand and improve the programs.
5. Share use of City and School District public facilities to provide more sports and recreation opportunities for youth at better maintained facilities.
6. Foster a close, collaborative working relationship among the City and School District to benefit the City's youth.

The project committee agreed upon the purpose of the potential recreation commission as follows: "Through a partnership between the City of Reading and the Reading School District, provide affordable sports, recreation and learning opportunities to Reading youth at schools, parks and playgrounds."

The project committee also identified how forming a recreation commission would benefit the City and School District, and ultimately, the residents of the City of Reading. These benefits were shared with City Council and School Board members:

1. City and School District community recreation facility assets will be better used. For example, a recreation commission could operate the School District's indoor swimming pools for youth swimming lessons and community use.
2. Neighborhood-based sports and recreation program opportunities will be offered at school locations and City park and playground facilities. Continuing the programs that exist and expanding programs at school locations and City park and playground facilities throughout the City's neighborhoods will help to make the programs accessible to children (within walking distance).
3. Youth will have a purpose through expanded sports and recreation programs. Programs will be a "hook" to keep kids in school. Problems such as crime and gang activities, low high school graduation rates, truancy, drug and alcohol use and teen pregnancy are lessened when youth are exposed to and involved in positive, constructive activities. Research has shown that children who are involved in sports and recreation programs perform better in school, helping them meet state standards in academic areas and reinforce classroom learning. Sports and recreation programs help to meet children's needs for belonging, recognition, achievement,

adventure, excitement, creativity and competition. They also help children develop self-confidence, increase self-esteem, improve social and communication skills and be more physically active.

4. Kids will stay active and keep learning during the summer months at neighborhood playground programs. By working together, the City and School District can bring the summer playground programs back to many locations, getting thousands of children out of the house and involved in constructive activities.
5. Youth sports programs will coordinate with the School District athletic programs to better prepare youth for middle and high school sports. Reading youth have tremendous athletic potential which isn't being developed to the extent it could be. School District teams could be dominant if children were involved in structured sports programs at younger ages. Some of the volunteer youth sports groups are struggling. With support from the recreation commission with items such as fundraising, scheduling use of facilities and recruiting and training coaches, the existing youth sports groups could continue to operate and strengthen their programs.
6. The operation of youth recreation programs will be supported through revenue earned, business support, grant funding, donations, and other sources rather than rely heavily on tax support. Intergovernmental cooperation increases the City's chances of receiving future grant funding for park and recreation facility improvements, plus a state grant is available to hire another full-time employee once a recreation commission is officially put in place. Obtaining 501(c)(3) status will open the doors to many more grant and foundation sources. A partnership with the School District will open up more grant possibilities. Businesses and individuals will donate funds to a non-profit agency that is not considered 'government.' The ability to spend the revenue earned to improve the programs offered for children will give the staff the incentive to raise money. Many programs will be able to be self-supporting.

In January 2011, work began on a list of 23 decisions that would need to be made to draft an intergovernmental agreement of cooperation. The items were discussed at length and consensus agreement was reached over the next few months. The peer consultant met with the School Board to present the Recreation Commission concept and answer questions in March 2011. The intergovernmental agreement was reviewed by City and School District solicitors, and suggested changes were incorporated. In July 2011, the School Board and City Council approved the intergovernmental agreement to create the Reading Recreation Commission. In large part, this was made possible by the great work of the project committee members, who remained focused on the goal and positive throughout the process. They kept the City and School District elected officials well informed, answering questions and addressing concerns about project progress. Above all, the project committee members were very willing to compromise and work together.

Recommendations

These recommendations to the City of Reading, Reading School District and Reading Recreation Commission are not in order of priority, and are not meant to be a comprehensive listing. The recommendations should be used as a guideline to begin operations. The Recreation Commission is expected by DCNR to develop a strategic plan with goals, objectives, action steps, timelines and success indicators. These recommendations should be used as a starting point to develop a strategic plan. Each recommendation should be evaluated and prioritized by the Recreation Commission, and specific actions to accomplish the tasks should be developed.

Administrative Issues

1. Create three executed, original copies of the intergovernmental agreement that are signed and sealed by the City and School District. Provide original executed copies to the City, School District and Recreation Commission. Make additional copies for Recreation Commission members, and City and School District administrative staff.
2. Submit the Circuit Rider grant application to DCNR for the executive director position.
3. Appoint the 11 members to the Recreation Commission and coordinate the first meeting. The citizen appointees should be qualified individuals who are supportive of recreation and are willing to give their time and talents.
4. The City should determine if its Park and Recreation Advisory Council will be needed once the Recreation Commission is functioning.
5. Finalize the salary ranges for the executive director and full-time program staff positions.
6. Draft a job description for the executive director, and review and revise job descriptions for the full-time program staff positions.
7. Run clearances on all existing full and part-time staff, if they have not been done.
8. Determine benefits for the full-time staff, such as vacation, sick leave and holidays.
9. Obtain health insurance, life insurance and pension plan for full-time staff.
10. Obtain worker's compensation insurance coverage.
11. Determine if the two existing full-time Recreation Division staff want to be employed by the Recreation Commission.
12. Recruit and hire an executive director with the help of the City or School District personnel department. Utilize DCNR staff for assistance and advice throughout the hiring process.
13. Join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS). Include the costs for the executive director to attend the PRPS State Conference in the budget.
14. Apply to the IRS for a federal employer identification number.
15. Open a bank account for the Recreation Commission.
16. Transfer the City Youth Fund and the City Tennis Fund to the Recreation Commission.
17. Contract with a payroll processing company. Develop timesheets and timekeeping policies.
18. Develop an accounting system with the help of an auditing firm familiar with nonprofit agencies. Decide whether to use the accrual or cash method of accounting. Establish a system of controls (checks and balances) for collection and deposit of funds and paying of bills.

19. Purchase accounting software and set up purchase order system.
20. Set up email and voice mail systems.
21. Obtain an auditor to perform the yearly audit.
22. Develop a record-keeping system to save Recreation Commission documents, minutes, financial statements and other important documents.
23. Develop a letter to send to the City and School District requesting contribution payments on a quarterly basis for the Recreation Commission.
24. Develop a detailed first-year operating budget for 2012. This will include complete breakdowns of hours and staff needed to operate existing programs. Start the budgeting process by figuring out how much money there is to spend – the total income the Recreation Commission will have to work with.
25. Have Recreation Commission added to City and School District general liability insurance policies as a named insured.
26. Obtain general liability insurance coverage and directors and officers insurance coverage as needed.
27. Process paperwork to obtain nonprofit 501(c)(3) status. Seek the assistance of the City or School District solicitor when preparing this application.
28. File for state and local tax exemption with the help of solicitors or accountants.
29. Apply for a nonprofit mailing permit, which will allow for reduced postage rates on bulk mailings.
30. Develop employment application form.
31. Develop process for criminal history and child abuse clearances to be obtained for all Recreation Commission employees.
32. Develop employee performance evaluation system.
33. Revise all existing forms used by the Recreation Division – such as accident reports, incident reports, rental forms, program evaluation forms, and registration forms – with Recreation Commission as the agency name.
34. Develop a mission statement for the Recreation Commission. It should be a concise one or two-sentence expression of who the organization is, what it does, for whom and where. It should be compelling and portray how the Recreation Commission is distinct from other organizations.
35. Inventory the supplies and equipment owned by the City Recreation Division.
36. Determine the supplies and equipment that will transfer to Recreation Commission ownership. Determine where equipment will be stored.
37. Develop a personnel policy manual to include items such as employee conduct and disciplinary action, leaves of absence, work conditions and hours, timekeeping and payroll, employee benefit programs, employment status and records, etc.
38. Begin the strategic planning process shortly after the executive director is employed.
39. Establish a process to keep lines of communication with the City Council and School Board open. Ask for a standing report on their meeting agendas. This can be done as a written report, introduced by Recreation Commission member(s) who represent each entity, or as a verbal report.

Recreation Commission Board Development

1. Set monthly meeting dates, times and locations for the Recreation Commission and place a public meeting notice advertisement in the local newspaper.
2. Elect officers for the Recreation Commission.
3. Draft and approve by-laws for the operation of the Recreation Commission. Have them reviewed by the City or School District solicitor prior to approval.
4. Prepare a contact list for Recreation Commission members. Include the term expiration dates for members on the contact list.
5. Activate the Recreation Commission committees (program, property, finance, personnel) and divide responsibilities among members.
6. Identify the roles and responsibilities of Recreation Commission members.
7. Adopt a communication and decision making outline for Recreation Commission members and staff members to follow.
8. Adopt a code of ethics that Recreation Commission members must sign.
9. Have Recreation Commission chair and executive director meet prior to each Recreation Commission meeting to develop the meeting agenda.
10. Have executive director provide a written report for each Recreation Commission meeting.
11. Develop an orientation manual for new Recreation Commission members and implement an orientation process.
12. Keep politics out of the operation of the Recreation Commission. Put the community and cooperative effort first.

Recreation Programs

1. Evaluate the existing City-sponsored recreation programs and determine what changes need to be made.
2. Track program enrollment and attendance.
3. Place a priority on resurrecting the supervised summer playground program at as many sites as possible.
4. Meet with all existing recreation providers in the City to develop a thorough understanding of what programs currently exist and how many children are being served.
5. Meet with all organizations that use City-owned facilities to run recreation programs, such as BlackTop Summer Basketball, Rising Sun Athletic Association, etc., so that it is clear who is using facilities and who is responsible for maintaining facilities.
6. Identify days and times when School District facilities may be available for community recreation programs.
7. Meet with School District representatives to coordinate use of school facilities including the supervision required and how the Recreation Commission will access the facilities.

8. Visit all City and School District recreation facilities and determine what programs may be possible at each facility.
9. Begin discussion with the School District to assist with any recreation-related programming currently sponsored by them.
10. Implement a scholarship system to allow those who are in financial need to participate in fee-based recreation programs.
11. Explore state licensing for summer day camps and after school programs.

Park Operation and Maintenance

1. Evaluate park and recreation areas and facilities for safety concerns and maintenance needs.
2. Meet with the City Parks Superintendent to gain a clear understanding of staffing levels for maintenance, what maintenance is currently being provided, and where help may be needed.
3. Standardize rental costs and procedures for City park facilities such as recreation centers, field houses, ball fields and picnic facilities.
4. Determine who is responsible for reservation, scheduling and permitting of ball field and park facility use.
5. Determine who is currently using and maintaining each City recreation facility.
6. Undertake a thorough study of the maintenance of City-owned parks, grounds and recreation facilities, with the aim to make decisions about who can best operate and maintain the facilities.

Public Relations

1. Secure a domain name that matches the name of the organization - Reading Rec if available.
2. Develop a website for the Recreation Commission. Include links to City and School District websites and ask the City and School District to include links on their websites to the Recreation Commission website.
3. Develop a logo for the Recreation Commission. Create letterhead, envelopes and business cards.
4. Develop a tag-line for the Recreation Commission that represents its mission and distinguishes it from other organizations.
5. On all written materials, highlight the partnership between the City and School District.
6. Develop a seasonal recreation guide to inform the public about Recreation Commission programs. Strive to produce two editions each year, Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter.
7. Post program information at all City offices and school buildings.
8. Distribute flyers for recreation programs through the schools.
9. Hold in-school assemblies to promote programs.
10. Set up a schedule for the executive director to attend City Council meetings and School Board meetings to provide status reports on the Recreation Commission.

Partnerships and Citizen Involvement

1. Identify those citizens who are currently active in their neighborhoods. Meet with these citizens to inform them about the Recreation Commission and ask for their input on recreation programs they feel are needed. Begin to involve citizens in parks and programs and to help spread the word about new programs.
2. Identify potential partners to help maintain parks and playground sites.
3. Meet with all City youth and adult sports associations and determine how the Recreation Commission can assist and support their efforts.
4. Schedule meetings with civic groups, neighborhood groups, church groups, youth serving agencies, school athletic booster clubs, school parent-teacher organizations, etc. to get their input on recreation opportunities and to discuss possible cooperative efforts.
5. Establish a network of park facility and recreation program providers to improve communication and help them understand their role as part of the City's recreation and parks system.
6. Coordinate public-private partnerships with area businesses to benefit recreation and parks opportunities for the City.
7. Schedule regular meetings with key City and School District staff to keep partners well informed about Recreation Commission.

Revenue Development

1. Expand sources of revenue through business sponsorships, donations, in-kind contributions and fund raising activities.
2. Set cost recovery goals for each recreation program and service offered.
3. Evaluate facility and equipment rental fees for the potential to increase them.
4. Institute a non-resident fee for recreation programs that is at a minimum 25% higher than City resident fees. This would include the existing youth tennis program.
5. Meet with hospitals and colleges/universities about program funding possibilities.
6. Produce more recreation program revenue through existing programs and by adding new programs.
7. Consider instituting a per child/adult fee for sports groups and associations utilizing City outdoor recreation facilities, to assist with providing proper maintenance.
8. Evaluate summer swimming pool admission fees for potential increases.

Final Thoughts

The new Reading Recreation Commission has many challenges ahead.

While the City and School District have agreed that cooperation for recreation makes sense, developing a new agency isn't going to be easy. There is much work to do internally, before improved programs for the City's children can even be considered.

New recreation programs and better maintained park areas and recreation facilities won't happen overnight. The Recreation Commission should be patient and move slowly. It's best to do things right, rather than fast! Growth needs to be at a pace that will allow new recreation programs to be of high quality and will start partnerships to maintain facilities on a solid foundation.

To attract the caliber of candidates with the experience and know-how to successfully develop the new Recreation Commission, offer a competitive salary for the executive director position. Hiring an experienced, professional leader is extremely important.

Sharing resources is also critical to the success of the new Recreation Commission. The agency should be considered as an extension of the City and School District. In-kind support should be provided whenever possible. This reduces the costs for the Recreation Commission, which ultimately reduces costs for the City and School District.

Lastly, keep the focus on the benefits to the City's children and to the quality of life in the City through expanded and improved recreation programs. Always highlight the positive partnership among the City and School District that is making this Recreation Commission's services possible.

South Reading City Gardens and Eco-Tourism

The idea is to use a few parcels of city owned land located at 544 Canal Street around Heritage Park for community gardens and Eco-Tourism. This area is currently freely used and maintained at Jackson's Landing by a local business called "Reading Rivertribe" (which rents Kayaks, Canoes, Rafts and Tubes) Reading City Church, and the City. The land in question is overgrown for the most part, and boundaries are illustrated in this Doc. using parcel viewer maps. The Owner of Reading Rivertribe LLC, Cory Rhodes, would like to lease the parcels at and around 544 Canal Street. In return he would maintain and clear the area for beautification and gardens. Areas will be defined and rented out to the neighborhood in 10x10 sections for \$10/20 dollars each for the season. This would generate revenue for the city at no expense to the city's budget while enhancing community and interdependence. Reading Rivertribe teaming up with Permacultive (who recently acquired a lot from the development authority in this same area) would create an Eco-Hub for South Reading with emphasis on the Schuylkill River restoration, Bio-Dynamic farming, Permaculture, Horticulture, and more. Local schools will have access to the land for educational functions allowing parents to become a part of the learning process with their kids through participation in gardening, or medicinal nature walks. The area will be maintained at no cost to the city and is a great idea. The volunteers involved with this vision are passionate about our future and wish to be the change they want to see in our world! Please consider this in your vote and know that it is coming from the heart ... and it will allow for many creative ideas and outlets to manifest, which in turn provides that soulful nourishment we all need! Thank You...

Parcels to be leased:
Pin# 530612950883
Pin# 530651864129
Pin#530651861186